

WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SHERIFFS & POLICE CHIEFS

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Serving the Law Enforcement Community & the Citizens of Washington



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New Statewide Internet Sex Offender Database Now Available to the Public

Washington law enforcement and high-technology community deliver Internet resource designed to identify location of State's most serious sex offenders

Olympia, Wash., February 26, 2004 -- The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC), Washington State Senator Pam Roach (R-Auburn) and a group of high-tech professionals named the "Megan's Law Group" today announced the availability of a new statewide sex offender Internet database intended to help the public better identify the location of the State's most serious sex offenders. Concerned citizens may now access this database at <http://ml.waspc.org> to determine if a sex offender is living in their neighborhood. While the database does not provide the exact address of a sex offender, it does alert residents to the number of sex offenders in a particular area and the seriousness of their past offenses.

"Led by Senator Roach's effort to secure funding, the legislature worked in conjunction with Megan's Law Group to help us deliver a first-class sex offender Internet database to protect citizens from potential sex predators," said Dave Reichert, King County Sheriff, WASPC Executive Board Member and President of the Washington State Sheriffs Association. "We anticipate the web site will be used by tens of thousands of concerned Washingtonians on a daily basis."

"Parents have a right to know the dangers that may lurk in their neighborhoods," said state Sen. Pam Roach (R-Auburn), sponsor of the Web site funding. "Communities are built around protecting and teaching children. Knowledge and awareness are the greatest tools we have to guard against sex predators."

In 2002, the Washington State Legislature passed a law authorizing the development of statewide Internet database to be built by WASPC. The database is designed to list all level II and level III offenders considered the most dangerous and likely to commit repeat offenses. Users of the database can search the site by address or name. By entering an address, all level II and III sex offenders living in the area will appear on the computer screen. Users will see the offender's photograph, address by 100 block and other relevant information about the offender.

"This database is important because it allows people across the state help maintain the safety of their children and community against known sex offenders," said state Rep. Al O'Brien (D-Mountlake Terrace).

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As chairman of the House Criminal Justice and Corrections Committee, Rep. O'Brien was instrumental in passing the 2002 enabling legislation for the sex offender database.

WASPC relied on a combination of private donations for the Megan's Law Group and public donations from the Legislature to build the Internet database. A group of high-tech professionals heard of the legislation to create the Internet database and called WASPC to offer assistance. Calling themselves the "Megan's Law Group", these professionals donated \$650,000 of high-tech equipment and services to design and build the Internet database.

"As private citizens we are honored to offer our technical expertise to assist WASPC in producing the statewide sex offender Web site," said Bob Rapp, a high-tech professional and Chairman of the Megan's Law Group. "Sex offenders are a troubling concern. With this Internet database, the citizens of Washington State can be better aware of the sex offenders that move into their neighborhoods."

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About WASPC

The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs was founded in 1963 and consists of executive and top management personnel from law enforcement agencies statewide. Our membership includes sheriffs, police chiefs, the Washington State Patrol, the Washington Department of Corrections, and representatives of a number of federal agencies. WASPC is governed by its executive board. WASPC is the only association of its kind in the nation combining representatives from local, state, and federal law enforcement into a single body, working toward a common goal. WASPC's function is to provide specific materials and services to all law enforcement agencies in the state, members and non-members alike. The 1975 legislature made WASPC a legal entity designating the association as "combination of units of local government."

About Megan's Law Group

The Megan's Law Group comprises private and public companies and individuals committed to using technology to inform Washington citizens about sex offenders in their neighborhoods. Company members include APC, Array, Compaq, Foundry, Hewlett-Packard and Microsoft. Individual volunteers include Jim Baskin, Elizabeth Damouni, Willie King, James Podgorski, Graylynne Randolph, Bob Rapp and Chris Shockey-Hogg.